Web, Library, and Teen Services 2.0

By Kimberly Bolan, Meg Canada, and Rob Cullin

I t seems like you can't go anywhere these days without someone throwing the 2.0 moniker around. Some argue it's the future of libraries and others maintain it's hype. The truth is, it's somewhere in between the two. Library 2.0 was significant enough to merit a multiple-week staff training course for ALA leaders, but what does it mean for everyone else? How does 2.0 apply to those working in YA services and why does it matter? And, more specifically, how does 2.0 apply to the teenagers in our schools and communities? In simplest terms, 2.0 is a new way of thinking about libraries. First and foremost, it follows one underlying golden rule: to dynamically interact with and listen to your users to create more user-centered services, both physical and technology-related. Fundamentally, 2.0 is the willingness to enhance library services through user collaboration.

is created, distributed, and disseminated, and how people interact with that content and each other through a whole new generation of Web platforms and tools. Wikipedia (a Web 2.0 concept in itself) says that the term Web 2.0 is attributed to Tim O'Reilly of O'Reilly Media and refers to a second generation of Internet-based services such as social networking sites (MySpace, Friendster), wikis (collaborative, shared-content sites), communication tools, and folksonomies (shared tagging and labeling, short for "folks" and "taxonomy").[1] These tools let people collaborate and share information online in previously unavailable ways. Everything to date has been Web 1.0, which consists of static Web sites containing graphics, or perhaps multimedia, and links to other static Web sites. According to Stephen Abram, Web 2.0 is about "conversations, interpersonal

networking, personalization, and individualism."[2] One early adapter to Web 2.0 was Amazon.com. Amazon opened its e-commerce site to allow users (not necessarily customers) to add comments about books and products. Amazon allows its users to catalog or add tags to their inventory, making it easier to search. Users can also make lists to combine interests or compile favorites. See the Web 2.0 sidebar for more examples.

What is Library 2.0?

The leap from Web 2.0 to Library 2.0 was the brainchild of Michael Casey, who first used the term on his blog, Library Crunch. Casey asserts that Library 2.0 will "embrace disruptive ideas."[3] At its heart, this means that in order to embrace Library 2.0, those who manage and work in libraries must be willing to make significant changes in the way they think and conduct business. This shift will result in taking the traditional library of sterile spaces, static collections, and vanilla catalogs to the next level in a variety of areas. Library 2.0 may initially seem painful for libraries as it requires radical trust, a concept highlighted by Darlene Fichter, data library coordinator at the University of Saskatchewan Library in Canada. Radical trust encompasses the community, library staff, and leadership; radical trust is about trusting the community; it means allowing

What is Web 2.0?

Even though Library 2.0 isn't solely about technology, it's useful to know how the 2.0 concept evolved. The phenomenon began outside the library world with the moniker Web 2.0. In simplified terms, Web 2.0 is the next generation of the Internet. It is not so much defined by speed or infrastructure, but how content

KIMBERLY BOLAN is a Library Consultant currently based in Indianapolis. She is the author of *Teen Spaces: The Step-by-Step Library Makeover* (ALA, 2003) and *Technology Made Simple* (ALA, 2006). She is an active member of YALSA's Technology for Young Adults Committee. MEG CANADA is the Senior Librarian at the newly formed Center for Innovation and Design at Hennepin County (Minn.) Library. She is the chair of YALSA's Technology for Young Adults Committee. ROB CULLIN is the cofounder of E*vanced Solutions, the coauthor of *Technology Made Simple* (ALA, 2006), and a Community Editor for WebJunction.

and encouraging customers and patrons to participate in shaping and creating the library.[4] This calls for library administrators and frontline staff to let go of some of their control; it also means building something without setting the end result in stone. Perhaps librarian Michael Stephens of the Tame the Web blog has the most unambiguous definition of how this comes together. He writes, "Library 2.0 simply means making your library's space (virtual and physical) more interactive, collaborative, and driven by community needs."[5]

Essentially librarians have to listen more, trust more, and be willing to relinquish some control to allow customers of all ages and backgrounds to have the best library experience possible. The focus of Library 2.0, however, is not just on technology components. Library 2.0 concepts are just as applicable and important to the building's physical design (for example, comfortable and inviting spaces that encourage excellent customer service). If the focus is only on the technology aspects of Library 2.0, we'll end up with Library 1.5 instead. Library 1.5 would consist of plenty of interesting Web 2.0 technologies with which few people would be familiar, emanating from buildings that have the same look, feel, and customer-service approaches they had before the Internet age.

Teen Services 2.0

So, what does all this mean for library service to teens? Basically, it all boils down to looking to teen users and nonusers—engaging them; listening to their needs, wants, and ideas; and actively implementing and moving forward. Think about their *experiences* with the library and then design library services for *them* (not us). Ask these questions: What kind of encounter can a teenager have with the physical library? What kind of encounter can a teenager have with the virtual library

---

Examples of Web 2.0 in the Library

RSS (Really Simple Syndication)—a way to easily collect news, announcements, postings, and content from a variety of Web sites in an automated way. Feeds could be used to broadcast arrivals of new materials (books, audiovisual, etc.), announcements, and event information.

Commentary and user-driven rating functionality—the inclusion of patrons' comments in online catalogs, online review sharing, and so on.

Blogs—Web pages that serve as publicly accessible personal journals that include commentary and idea sharing.

Wikis—collaborative Web sites (for example, Wikipedia) that are the collective work of many authors and allow anyone to edit and modify content.

Social networking sites (for example, MySpace and Facebook)—sites that allow librarians to create library profiles, link to "friends," share what's new, and just generally network in a virtual environment.

Photo sharing sites (for example, Flickr)—sites to post pictures of various library and community functions, services, and activities.

Audio and video—post digital audio or video (of library and community func-

tions, interviews, events, resources, and tours) to sharing sites such as YouTube in streaming format or in downloadable formats such as podcasts.

Personalized alerts—e-mail and text messages about reserved and overdue materials, program and event reminders, and more.

Interactive Web services—instant messaging (IM) reference, dynamic and searchable online program and event information with online registration, online summer reading programs, and online access to meeting room and equipment information with the ability to submit electronic reservation requests.

Personalization and "My Profile" features—use a library barcode and pin number to manage subscriptions to electronic newsletters and announcements and allow users to personalize a Web page with content and color.

Folksonomies, tagging, and tag clouds—in library catalogs, users can add their own categories and keywords with frequently used words appearing in a cloud of hyperlinked words.

(the library's Web site, blog, and so on)? How can a teenager's library experience become more interactive and user-driven?

Teen Involvement

Community involvement from participants of all ages is the most important ingredient of almost anything a 2.0 library does, and the backbone of the Teen Services 2.0 movement is teen participation. It's about keeping those teens you currently serve while actively seeking out those who don't

use library services. Teen involvement is not only a Library 2.0 concept unto itself, it is also what drives the other elements of 2.0. For instance, how can a library be more interactive, collaborative, and driven by community needs without directly asking and involving the community? When it comes to getting teenagers involved, the most successful libraries encourage teen input and assistance from the beginning, and continue encouraging them into young adulthood. This means involving young adult users in service creation

and evaluation, including information gathering, assessment, library planning, and implementation. Participation can come in the form of teen advisory boards, focus groups, committee work, and even teen representatives on the library board. Involvement and input should relate to all areas of the library including technology, customer service, space design, marketing, collection development, programming, and more. Ask teen collaborators about Web 2.0 concepts and ideas. Get their input and their assistance. Since some of Web 2.0 ideas are still foreign and intimidating to many adults working in libraries, teens can often be a great resource for incorporating what's hot and relevant.

Physical and Virtual Space

Another key component of Teen Services 2.0 is the creation of comfortable, inviting teen spaces. When polling teens ages 13–18 about what they like in their physical library space they consistently want:

- a recognizable space—something that they know is for them and that they can call their own;
- an area that is colorful, comfortable, energizing, spacious, and welcoming;
- a well-organized and well-laid-out place where materials can easily be found; and
- someplace where they can stay awhile and just hang out, read, do homework, listen to music, or work on the computer.[6]

Hand-in-hand with physical library space is virtual space and the development of library Web sites. Just as with physical space, teens have an abundance of opinions and requests when it comes to library Web sites. Functionality is number one on their list. They want clean, easy-to-use sites that aren't overloaded with text. Young adults ask for sites they can use to interact with

other teens and library staff, take quizzes, submit reviews, play games, look up information, chat with library staff for assistance, post messages and comments, get current information on library programs and registration, participate in online summer reading, and more. The Prince William County (Va.) Library enhanced its Web site by offering online summer reading in 2006. They increased active reader participation by 70 percent and the number of reviews submitted increased almost 500 percent.[7] Starting a mediated blog or a library wiki, answering reference questions sent by IM or text, or adding an RSS feed to the teen Web page are just a few simple ways to get on the path to 2.0.

Customer Service

Customer service is yet another important element of Library 2.0 centered around breaking down the barriers of traditional library customer service. Getting out from behind the desk (or eliminating the desk altogether) and moving toward a more proactive interaction with customers is key. Examples of this include examining self-serve options where staff is readily available for patron assistance, using library greeters, implementing information kiosks and digital signage throughout the library, and using roaming librarians. Another relevant aspect involves changing how libraries deal with teens—too often with double standards—by writing teen- and user-friendly policies. Many of these ideas, coupled with working to eliminate the us-versus-them mentality among library administration and staff, constitute a more retail-minded approach.

Gaming

Gaming is one of the newer services that libraries are implementing that embraces

Library 2.0 beliefs. Contrary to what some may think, gaming is recognized as a literacy activity. Cynics might consider gaming to be a disruptive or noneducational activity, but administrators and staff at libraries such as Ann Arbor (Mich.) District Library, Bloomington (Ill.) Public Library, and Kansas City (Mo.) Public Library recognize that teens self-regulate their behavior for the privilege of participating in events and using the library's space. Even smaller, rural libraries such as Carver's Bay (S.C.) Public Library, are incorporating gaming as a part of regular services by purchasing dedicated gaming workstations.[8] Some libraries invite teens to bring in their own game consoles and use a meeting room with a projector to display the games. Circulating video games as part of the collection is another way to incorporate games in libraries.

Podcasting

Podcasting and vodcasting (video podcasting) are two ways libraries can harness the energy young adults bring into the library. At ImaginOn's Library Loft, part of the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (PLCMC) in North Carolina, Studio-i is a multimedia production studio where teens produced a commercial about the summer reading program to vodcast to their peers. Rather than expect teens to view the video only on the Library Loft page, the teens also uploaded the commercial to YouTube (www.youtube.com/watch?v=J_foIxyL-CPU). Likewise, many libraries produce podcasts by and for teens and make them available on iTunes, as well as on their own libraries' Web sites.

Social Networking

As more and more teens join social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook,

it no longer seems adequate to simply provide pages on library Web sites that "advertise" to young adults. Libraries can create accounts on social networking sites to promote events, garner teen input, and link back to the library home page. Creative libraries, such as Alexandria (Ind.) Public Library, use MySpace accounts to advertise new books. A social networking site can also be an excellent way to connect with teens by linking to popular authors and teen advisory group members with their own accounts or profiles.

Photo sharing sites like Flickr.com are another excellent venue for pictures taken at teen-oriented programs. Flickr allows users to upload digital photos yielding a searchable database of pictures and the stories they tell. The search terms "teen" and "read" in Flickr's search field results in photos of Teen Read Week™ displays, summer reading programs, and volunteer photos. This gives the library a human face, showing a visual representation of teens actively participating in its services. Flickr is also easy to update and offers another dynamic service as photos may be added regularly.

Learn More about the Web 2.0 Movement

Several libraries are incorporating training to help familiarize staff with Web 2.0 concepts. One notable example is PLCMC's Learning 2.0 project. While the training program offers incentives for PLCMC staff to participate, the curriculum and activities are available to anyone (http://plcmcl2 -about.blogspot.com). Another program,

Five Weeks to a Social Library, will be presented free of charge online from February 12 through March 17, 2007 (www.sociallibraries.com). Topics will include blogging, RSS, wikis, social networking software, Flickr, and SecondLife (http://secondlife.com), an online digital "world" created entirely by its residents. Library Success: A Best Practices Wiki (http://libsuccess.org/index .php?title=Main_Page) provides examples of cutting-edge ideas and resources. The wiki collects lists of libraries that use different technologies such as instant messaging to provide reference assistance online. The teen services section contains a list of library blogs for teen patrons as well as a list of library MySpace profiles with teen services as their focus. **YALS**

Additional Resources

Bolan, Kimberly and Robert Cullin. *Technology Made Simple: An Improvement Guide for Small and Medium Libraries.* ALA, 2007; ISBN 0-8389-0920-5; $40 ($36 for ALA members).

Demsey, Beth. "Power: Designing Buildings and Services from the End User's Viewpoint Transforms Access for Everyone." *Library Journal* 130, no. 20 (Dec. 2005), 72–75.

ImaginOn: The Joe & Joan Martin Center, www.imaginon.org

Steinkuehler, Constance. "Why Game (Culture) Studies Now?" *Games and Culture* 1, no. 1 (Jan. 2006), 97–102.

Stephens, Michael. "Web 2.0 & Libraries: Best Practices for Social Software,"

Library Technology Reports 42, no. 4 (July/Aug. 2006); ISSN 0024-2586; $63.

References and Notes

1. Wikipedia, s.v. "Web 2.0," http:// en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_2.0 (accessed Sept. 28, 2006).
2. Stephen Abram, "Web 2.0, Library 2.0, and Librarian 2.0: Preparing for the 2.0 World," *SirsiDynix OneSource* 2, no. 1 (Jan. 2006), www.imakenews.com/sirsi/e _article000505688.cfm (accessed Oct. 8, 2006).
3. Michael Casey, "Working Towards a Definition of Library 2.0," LibraryCrunch, Oct. 21, 2005, www.librarycrunch .com/2005/10/working_towards_a _definition_o.html (accessed Oct. 8, 2006).
4. Darlene Fichter, "Web 2.0, Library 2.0 and Radical Trust: A First Take," Blog on the Side, Apr. 2, 2006, http://library.usask .ca/~fichter/blog_on_the_side/2006/04/ web-2.html (accessed Oct. 8, 2006).
5. Sarah Hoghton-Jan, "Library 2.0 Discussion: Michael Squared," Dec. 19, 2005, http://librarianinblack.typepad.com/ librarianinblack/2005/12/library_20 _disc.html (accessed Sept. 28, 2006).
6. Comments taken from teen focus groups held by Kimberly Bolan, 2004–06.
7. Cathy Chang, e-mail message to author Kim Bolan, Aug. 17, 2006.
8. Betha Gutsche, "Carvers Bay (SC) Branch Library: Gaming the Way to Literacy." WebJunction, Aug. 1, 2006, http://webjunction.org/do/ DisplayContent?id=13796 (accessed Oct. 8, 2006).